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SUBJECT: OECD REPORTING: ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY COMMITTEE
EXTENDED BUREAU MEETING, NOVEMBER 9-10, PARIS, FRANCE

SUMMARY

Judith E. Ayres, Assistant Administrator for International Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency, led the U.S. delegation at the November 9-10 meeting of the OECD Environmental Policy Committee (EPOC) extended bureau, in Paris, France. The focus of the session was to discuss a new Strategic Vision for EPOC and to initiate discussions about EPOC's 2007-2008 program of work. The U.S. worked successfully with the Swedish Chair, Mats Olsson and other Member countries to further refine the Strategic Vision. The Strategic Vision will be finalized this November, via written procedure, and forwarded to the full meeting of EPOC in March 2006. The Strategic Vision places a renewed emphasis on the economic aspects of environmental work at OECD and will guide the prioritization of environmental work at OECD over the next five to ten years. The U.S. also offered its views on the preliminary 2007-2008 program of work discussion paper and will submit further comments in writing. The U.S. is supportive of the proposed program of work generally, and supports in particular the new program output area "Environment in the Global Economy."

EPOC Strategic Vision

1. As a member of the Task Force that drafted the new EPOC Strategic Vision, the U.S. is a strong proponent of the Vision and successfully negotiated further refinements. The purpose of the Vision is to guide environmental work of the Committee over the next 5-10 years; to promote the implementation of the OECD Environmental Strategy for the First Decade of the 21st Century; and to strengthen the economic component of OECD's environmental agenda.

2. As a result of U.S. interventions, it was agreed that final written comments on the draft Strategic Vision could be submitted to the Secretariat by November 16, 2005. It was further agreed that the EPOC Chair would make further refinements to the Strategic Vision including: adding a new key introductory section; shortening the overall document by moving lists of examples to an annex; incorporating the concept of eco-efficiency policy innovations; rephrasing the importance of country environmental performance reviews (EPR) without specifically calling for an increase in the frequency of EPRs; and recasting the document to be more forward looking, rather than including sections that recap past work of the Committee.

3. Australian delegate and EPOC Bureau member Kevin Keefe led a discussion about EPOC Communication strategy and needs. He reminded delegates of the 2002 Communication discussion that EPOC held and suggested that each program of work proposal in the future should be accompanied by an explicit communication plan that addresses who the target audience for the work is; what the key messages of the work are; how the proposed work relates to the Strategic Vision; and how the proposed work will be evaluated.

4. The Chair summarized the Communication discussion noting that EPOC should look for increased opportunities to create debates around its work products; that it should identify key work programs and products worthy of more external communication efforts; that it should assess the impact of its work in a more explicit fashion; and that it should strengthen the

OECD web site to further the dissemination of EPOC work. The Secretariat was asked to consider this discussion and prepare a follow-up agenda item for the March 2006 meeting.

Stakeholder Session

15. Representatives of the Business and Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC), the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) and European environmental groups gave their comments about the strategic vision and the proposed program of work. The BIAC attendees thought the strategic vision was a positive development and that it would help to prioritize EPOC's work program, better integrate the environmental work into economic considerations, and broaden the cooperation of nonmember countries. BIAC will discuss the Strategic Vision in its upcoming session with OECD member nation Ambassadors. The European environmental groups, represented by John Hontelez, noted their support for the Strategic Vision and their concern for the use of the term competitiveness. TUAC noted that the concept of sustainable development seemed to be missing from the Strategic Vision and challenged delegates to "set the bar a bit higher". TUAC added that the connection to social issues, such as employment security, could be strengthened and noted the concentration of social and environmental issues in the Secretary General's recent priority list, currently under discussion by member nations.

Discussion of the 2007-2008 Environment Program of Work

16. OECD Environment Directorate Director Lorents Lorentsen opened the discussion of the 2007-2008 program of work by describing the proposed work program areas from the perspective of the Strategic Vision. As a result of Strategic Vision discussions, the preliminary program of work includes a new output area entitled "Environment in the Global Economy."

17. The U.S. noted that it was supportive, generally, of all the proposed areas of work, including the new output area "Environment in the Global Economy." The U.S. suggested broadening the scope of proposed output area 2.3.2 from the currently titled "Climate Change and Biodiversity" to our proposed title "Natural resource management, including climate change." We emphasized that this change would allow EPOC to maintain latitude to address other vital natural resource issues such as, for example, surface, ground and marine water management issues and urban and rural land use issues -- without having to "link" such discussions to climate change or biodiversity. This notion was supported by some delegations (Canada, Australia) and opposed by others (Switzerland, UK).

18. The U.S. secured permission from the Secretariat to provide detailed written comments on the program of work discussion paper by November 25, 2005. After that time, the Secretariat will compile all written and oral comments, attempt an initial prioritization of proposed activities, provide budget figures for proposed activities and provide all this information to delegations by the end of January 2006. Delegations will then proceed with a more explicit prioritization exercise of this refined program document and submit responses back to the Secretariat in early February 2006. The Secretariat will then formulate a new version of the suggested 2007-2008 program of work and budget for use at the March 1-3, 2006 meeting of EPOC.

Other Business

19. The Committee was briefed on the progress of the OECD Headquarters site renovation project. This multi-year project is reaching its mid point ahead of schedule and on budget. The new conference center and renovated Headquarters will be open for delegation meetings as early as spring 2007.

Upcoming Meetings of EPOC

110. The Committee confirmed the following EPOC meetings: March 1-3, 2006 in Paris; October 25-27, 2006 in Krakow, Poland (when OECD Headquarters are closed for renovation); and a proposed spring meeting in May 23-25, 2007 at the newly reopened OECD conference

center in Paris.

REID